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# China's Use of Public Diplomacy in the United States: From World War II to the Twenty-First Century

*Sally Burt*

## Abstract

This chapter examines China's use of public diplomacy in World War II. By sending personal representatives to the United States to lobby the American public on China's behalf, Chiang Kai-shek was able to negotiate favorable public opinion in the United States that influenced US policy makers. There were direct attempts to influence the outcome of the 1944 presidential election. Diplomatic moves were made to influence the candidate the Chinese saw as most likely to win that election and support given toward his victory. We can compare this to the influencing of elections in the United States by foreign powers in 2016 and the use of modern public diplomacy. Through this exploration, this chapter will show that the conduct of public diplomacy to influence a foreign state is neither a new phenomenon nor is it an inherent problem. The way states manage their broader diplomatic relations to protect their own national interest is the key.

**Keywords:** China, United States, foreign interference, elections, diplomacy

## 1. Introduction

Public diplomacy is a concept that has come into sharp focus in academic debate. Recent events, such as the interference in the 2016 US election have drawn attention to the use of public diplomacy to influence the outcomes of the democratic process. The notion that a foreign power can infiltrate social media and internet-based communications in order to impose its own agenda on another population rightly causes concern. This occurrence highlights the ease with which governments can interact with the public of a foreign country in the cyber age. It is this concept, a government conducting diplomacy with a foreign public, rather than through the more traditional government to government channels, that has drawn the attention of scholars. Understanding public diplomacy and the ways in which governments can persuade other states to support their interests through gaining favorable public opinion will provide great insights into the functioning of modern diplomacy. One needs to be aware, however, that the concept of public diplomacy, while relatively new in the academic nomenclature is neither a new activity and nor is it born out of the cyber age. Long before the internet, states were interacting with foreign societies through channels with the public and trying to persuade them to support policies that worked in their favor.

China is one of the commonly studied states in the public diplomacy literature. With China's rise in recent decades and its move back into the global community, it has become the focus of scholarly attention on many fronts. In an attempt

to understand the rise of China and how it is being achieved, the use of public diplomacy by the Chinese government comes under scrutiny. This is due in part to the development of Joseph Nye's theory of soft power and his work in relation to Sino-US power relations in the hard and soft power realms. China is indeed an interesting case to study in these areas. It is important, though, for that modern use of public diplomacy to be put into a broader and more historical context in order to really enlighten the debate about modern elements of public diplomacy that are of concern. During World War II, China used very effective public diplomacy to win support from the United States for aid and favorable strategy during the war, but it also led to China's inclusion as one of the few major players in the creation of the post-war international relations infrastructure. In more recent times, China has turned to public diplomacy again as a strategy to gain favorable attitudes towards its foreign policy but with much less effect. Examining the history of China's public diplomacy in the United States sheds light on some of the concerns facing modern iterations of public diplomacy and cyber technology.

This chapter will define public diplomacy and examine how China uses it now. After commenting on its effectiveness in modern times, a reflection will be made on how China has used it in the past and its effectiveness then will be explored. This will provide a structure for the evaluation of modern public diplomacy and what is different as opposed to just appearing so. The history of Chinese public diplomacy in the United States shows that new technologies and methods of engaging with a foreign public are not necessarily making it more effective. States have been using public diplomacy to gain favor for their foreign policy and interests in other countries for a very long time. Foreign interference in elections is also not a new concept and this has been occurring for centuries. Although new technology and the cyber age appear to make these things more effective, it is not necessarily the case. This is not to say that foreign interference should not be a concern and that the lack of transparency and accountability with which it can occur in the cyber age should not be recognized and addressed. The issues around how best to manage the use of these new technologies and the norms that should be established around public diplomacy need to be explored within the proper context of what is occurring in more recent times in relation to public diplomacy. The way states manage their broader diplomatic relations to protect their own national interest is the key. Strategies to ensure their own interests are protected and supported by the political system and the public need to be developed with a clear understanding of what the real issues and challenges are in order that they can be addressed.

## **2. What is public diplomacy?**

Public diplomacy is the use of media and propaganda in order to influence the public in another country to have a favorable attitude towards your state. According to the Chinese Assistant Foreign Minister in 2004, "[t]he basic goal of public diplomacy is to enhance the exchanges and interaction with the public in order to guide and win the understanding and support of the public for foreign policies" [1]. Other scholars have defined it as "an instrument used by states, associations of states, and some sub-state and non-state actors to understand cultures, attitudes, and behavior; build and manage relationships; and influence thoughts and mobilize actions to advance their interests and values" [2]. In an increasingly interdependent global environment, it is crucial that states have widespread support for their foreign policies in order to be seen as legitimate and credible in the international community. Gaining influence among the public of different states is a way of establishing that broad support.

Propaganda is a closely related concept to public diplomacy. Propaganda is the intentional attempt to sway individuals or groups of people into believing a certain perspective or way of thinking about an event or policy. These two concepts are similar, although as diplomacy is only related to foreign affairs, public diplomacy might be conducted with the use of propaganda, however, not all propaganda will have diplomatic relations as a focus. Since World War II, propaganda as a concept has loaded perception behind it. It has adopted the connotations of evil intent, for which it was used during that conflict. Propaganda in itself is not inherently bad, but it is generally thought of as such in common thinking. Ultimately, though, the aim of propaganda and of public diplomacy can be the same. The objective is to gain support from foreign states for one's own foreign policy and respect for its national interests.

Public diplomacy is also connected to the concept of "soft power" that was developed by Joseph Nye in the early 1990s. Nye defined soft power as the ability to gain cooperation from another state in achieving one's desired outcomes. As opposed to using "hard power" of military and economic strength, soft power uses culture, values and shared beliefs and attitudes to persuade, rather than force, another actor in working towards your desired outcomes. The way to do that, according to Nye, is to communicate with other countries and their citizens and engage in cultural exchanges in order to build up the attractiveness of your own values and culture to another society [3]. Or, in other words, conduct public diplomacy. Public diplomacy, then, is a means of creating soft power, while soft power is the actual ability to influence policy.

Public diplomacy as a concept is not new, though the language and nomenclature is relatively so. Although public diplomacy was first being discussed by political scientists at the beginning of the twenty-first century, states have actually been conducting public diplomacy in various forms since the state system and diplomacy was developed. With globalization and the spread of global communication, discourse across state boundaries and between non-state actors, as well as the general public, of different countries became much easier. This phenomenon also facilitated public diplomacy and made communication with the people of a foreign state much easier. Along with Nye's theory on soft power, these interactions created interest in the study of public diplomacy and it became the subject of scholarship in its own right.

There is, however, still much work to be done on the concept of public diplomacy and its related theories. As technology continues to advance and create new opportunities for means of cross-border interaction, public diplomacy progresses with it. Governments are developing strategies around the use of public diplomacy as recognition grows for the need to conduct diplomacy in this way. By examining the use of public diplomacy in certain contexts, and historically, we can gain a better understanding of the concept and its development over time. We can also put the current debate about public diplomacy, and the use of new technologies to "interfere" in foreign powers' politics into a clearer perspective.

In China, public diplomacy is a challenging concept. The nature of its political regime means that it is difficult to grasp the idea of a separate public view from a government view. The idea of trying to persuade the general public of something in order to achieve political ends does not sit well with the Communist authoritarian regime. China, over many decades of Communist rule, has focused on obtaining political and economic power and then expected that that will translate into respect from the international community and other great powers. It is only in recent times, as global networks and media have begun to infiltrate international relations that China has begun to explore and give serious effort and resources to the development



of public diplomacy [1]. The United States controlled the rhetoric around China's rising power in the international community and was able to create doubt about China's peaceful intentions. China was framed as a threat to the Liberal world order that democratic states had worked so hard to establish in the aftermath of the Cold War. Eventually Chinese government officials could see the need to respond to the United States' narrative and to promote its own perspective through public diplomacy in order to be taken seriously on the global stage [4].

For the purposes of this chapter, the term public diplomacy will be used to describe the concept of government's interacting and communicating with a foreign power's citizens in order to influence their attitudes in favor of their interests and policies. Direct public to public diplomacy will not be the focus of the discussion that follows. The means by which communication takes place between the government of one state and the public of another can vary and this chapter will explore the different methods that governments use for this purpose. The motive under study will be the use of a foreign state's public to gain favor for a country's foreign policy and interests. This can be achieved either through political pressure brought about by shifting public opinion or by influencing the political process itself through influencing election outcomes or legislators in order to gain support for a change in policy or legislation.

### **3. How does China use public diplomacy?**

China's recent record of using public diplomacy is scratchy at best. There are some countries that have developed a favorable attitude toward China's influence and welcome the benefits, particularly economic benefits, that China's involvement in their state brings. Latin American, African and some Asian states see China as a positive force in their countries [5]. This is not generally the case in the West. China's interference in local politics and economics is viewed as a challenge to the recognized order and something to be controlled and limited. Chinese military activities and perceived aggression to build its military prowess has been viewed by many Western states as a rising threat, making them wary of embracing Chinese influence. Although ancient China is often viewed by those in the West as being mysterious and virtuous, under the current Communist regime, China is seen as a threat to the dominant Liberal global order.

The Tiananmen Square incident and the global response to it exposed China's lack of understanding about how to work with international media and the international community more broadly, and it also created a focus on China as the next threat to the Liberal world order after Russia's capitulation. In the aftermath of 9/11, when Middle Eastern Islamic Extremists provided a new threat focus, the Chinese government was given an opportunity to shift global thinking about China. Although China's hard power had grown over the last two decades, little had changed in terms of the international perception of China. The expectation had been that increasing a state's hard power would eventually and automatically lead to respect and recognition from the international community. This, however, did not occur. In the early twenty-first century, Wen Jiabao began to see the need for a concerted effort towards establishing Chinese soft power and the need for a focus on public diplomacy in order to achieve this. It was recognized that there was a need to gain support from ordinary people for China's foreign policy in order to establish credibility and legitimacy in the international community more broadly. Branches were created within the Ministry for Foreign Affairs to focus on public and mass diplomacy [6].

A range of activities were undertaken in order to advance China's public diplomacy. One major program has been the establishment of Confucius Institutes in 64 countries around the world. These institutes have the purpose of promoting the study of Chinese language and culture. The Chinese have come to the view that the biggest barrier to friendly perceptions of China relate to the gap between Western and Chinese language and culture. In order to address this, in 2004 the Chinese government established Hanban (the Confucius Institute Headquarters) to found institutes around the globe to teach foreign citizens about Chinese culture, provide classrooms for language training and to encourage cultural exchanges for foreign students [7]. Confucius Institutes are joint ventures between foreign universities and Chinese partner universities. Chinese universities are ultimately controlled by the Chinese department of education and therefore, are influenced by government. Confucius Institutes can, then, be seen as a channel of communication and interaction between the Chinese government and foreign publics.

The extent to which the Chinese government is able to interact with foreign university students has grown as part of a concerted effort to establish opportunities for cultural exchanges. By engaging at this level, the Chinese government is able to counter the narrative established by Western society about China's intentions and the threat it poses to Western values. Instead of allowing the West to monopolize the message in global politics, China is now attempting to influence those engaging in the discourse and to have some control over the narrative [1]. That level of control and influence by the government over what in Western societies would be considered to be best left as independent discourse makes societies like the US nervous and suspicious of these channels of engagement.

China has some issues in using the mass media for creating alternative messaging and interacting with foreign publics. Due to the nature of the use of the media in China, and its authoritarian regime, the Chinese government is not shrewd at handling the international media. There have been efforts to expand the reach of Chinese newspapers and Chinese national television into foreign markets to provide some media reach. The extent of the Chinese diaspora can be seen as a great asset for the Chinese government as it allows a broader network of cultural exchange and provides avenues for spreading Chinese media [4, 5, 8]. Chinese public diplomacy, however, is seen by Western societies as being too top down and driven too closely by the Chinese government. This limits the effectiveness of Chinese public diplomacy, particularly in the age of the internet and the ease with which person to person communication can occur even across borders. People to people communication exposes the extent to which the Chinese government controls the message and it is seen as illegitimate and non-authentic.

Wei [9] has conducted a thorough examination of the effectiveness of Chinese public diplomacy. By establishing the objectives of Chinese public diplomacy and evaluating the level of positive feeling towards China in foreign societies, Wei found that in the short term, Chinese public diplomacy is not very effective. The rise in China's military strength and capability is seen in most Western countries as a threat, and this perception is hard to overcome. Russia was the only state considered in the study that was unconcerned by increasing Chinese military power. Interestingly, Wei's study found that economic factors do not have as significant a positive influence as one might expect. The economic benefits of interactions with China are clearly outweighed by concern about the threat perception. Wei acknowledges that the study explores the short-term effectiveness of Chinese public diplomacy and that the impact of longer-term strategies, such as the investment in Confucius Institutes, will only be able to be measured in a much longer time frame.

#### **4. How has China used public diplomacy in the past?**

Although the concept of public diplomacy has been named such only in recent years, it has been an activity of governments for decades and indeed centuries. The rise of democracies has seen public diplomacy become an active tool of states to influence public opinion, which in turn leads government policy, in directions that are favorable to their interests. In wartime this can be a particularly useful tool, as it allows for states to influence the strategy, or policies of other states to assist their own wartime aims. Allies are keen to assist each other and cannot afford to create open disharmony or show disunity to the enemy. During World War II, the United States had many Allies and it was a uniquely complex war being fought on many fronts against a coalition of enemy powers. This meant that compromise and careful strategic planning had to govern every decision about where materiel and supplies were sent and what operations would be fought at what time. Amongst the competition within the Allied camp, China was just one voice and the war being fought on Chinese soil was viewed as a backwater battle that lacked the urgency of the war being fought in Europe. Politicians in the US had to manage the expectations of the different Allies as well as that of the American public in terms of what could be done towards achieving victory.

During World War II, China struggled to assert its place among its great power Allies and to force or shame them into providing China support in resisting Japan. Many in the West, including in the United States, were skeptical of China's proclaimed potential to reach great power status in the post-war world, despite its inclusion as one of the Big Four of the United Nations. In order to sway US public opinion and policy-makers, Chiang Kai-shek sent his Foreign Minister, T.V. Soong, and his wife, Madame Chiang, as personal representatives, to Washington. Stationing these significant figures in the US created political pressure and allowed active public diplomacy. Through their physical presence among the American people and Franklin Roosevelt's advisors, Soong and Madame Chiang along with other Chinese representatives gained a better sense of public sympathies and fostered an understanding of China among ordinary US citizens. They hoped to turn that sympathy, and the popularity of China's cause, into financial and military aid and favorable policy decisions. Other factors, such as Japan's actions and the international situation played a role in the development of the pro-China sentiment, but could not prevent the waning of US support after 1944. Until then, though, the Chinese were quite successful in gaining the sympathy of the US public to back their cause.

After several prominent American officials had visited China between the beginning of 1941 and end of 1942, it had become apparent that Chiang and his close advisors were able to influence those politicians to look favorably on China and its plight. One of the prominent Americans to visit China was Wendell Willkie, who was a Republican politician. In 1940, Willkie had contested the presidential election, opposing Franklin Roosevelt. Although he had been unsuccessful, it was widely believed that he would try again in 1944 [10]. According to the US Ambassador in China at the time, Clarence Gauss, the Chinese government was firmly of the opinion that Willkie would win the election in 1944 and would be the US leader sitting at the peace talks to bring an end to World War II [11]. That being the case, the Chinese wanted to maximize their influence over him. They certainly gained his favor during his visit, as on his return to the US, during a press conference he stated "...one of the difficulties facing me [in remaining objective] is that one falls so much in love with the Chinese people that it is difficult to form a critical and fact-finding judgement" [12]. If Chiang wanted to increase his influence on US officials, gaining favorable public opinion for China would be an excellent means to achieve this.



Willkie's comment suggested that contact between the Chinese people and Americans could be used to sway them. Although American officials were coming to China and being influenced through that contact, bringing the Chinese people to America might also be an effective means to expand the reach. Generalissimo Chiang and Chinese officials were convinced that being present with the President and his closest advisors was the best way to gain persuasive power over US foreign policy decisions [13, 14]. China began a campaign of influence and engagement with the US public that today would be termed public diplomacy. Officials saw the potential of interacting with the American public directly in order to win favor for its policies and for greater aid and war supplies. The aim was to use the pressure of public opinion to persuade US officials to support China more openly. To do this Chiang decided to send several of his key officials and prominent figures to the United States. He even found an excuse to send his wife, who had a reputation for her beauty and ability to be persuasive and had already successfully won over several US officials using her wiles.

Madame Chiang Kai-shek, who held no responsible position in the government other than being the Generalissimo's wife, toured the United States from February until April 1943. She worked both in public and behind the scenes. As the President's personal guest, she stayed at the Roosevelt family estate in Hyde Park, and then in the White House. Her public engagements included addressing each house of Congress, making a speech at Madison Square Garden before a boxing match, and finished with a night of pageantry and speaking at the Hollywood Bowl in Los Angeles [15]. As Chiang Kai-shek remained in China to oversee the war effort and command his troops, Madame Chiang was given access to platforms to address the American people that protocol would not have allowed if he had come to the US with her [16]. Both Chiang Kai-shek and FDR were fond of personalized diplomacy and sidestepping formal diplomatic channels. They believed that more could be achieved with a private conversation than by using the usual diplomatic formalities [17]. Madame Chiang promoted China's interests through educating the American public about the similarities between the two peoples and by exposing them to herself as the embodiment of modern China. She spoke about democracy, Christianity, justice and cultural plurality, and the plight of China in fighting Japanese oppression, themes that were designed to show that China was not as different or as backward as their long-held stereotypes made out. Madame Chiang was educated in the United States and spoke fluent English. She was the personification of Sino-US relations. From the early days of the war with Japan, Madame Chiang had been writing in the American press and media about China and its causes. Her trip to the US was the opportunity for those familiar with her work to see her in the flesh [16].

The aim of her trip to the United States was to promote China's interest and encourage public support for US policies that aided those interests. Madame Chiang and other Chinese officials were convinced of the importance of having influential people in Washington, D.C. They felt that being present with the American people was the best way to gain persuasive power over US foreign policy decisions [13]. Her time in the US was a success in terms of achieving those aims. She had enthusiastic support and encouragement for her mission from some prominent Congressmen who even tried to lobby the President and others on her behalf. Despite this, or perhaps because of it, Lauchlin Currie, one of President Roosevelt's advisors, wrote to John Carter Vincent, the key State Department Officer in charge of relations with China, that officials in the capital were "a bit peeved about her speaking tour" and were sick of hearing the same thing every time she spoke [18]. He noted in March 1943 that "[s]ome people here [in Washington] are still pretty sentimental about China and do a lot of worrying as to whether or not 'the Chinese' will be displeased



at this or that" [18]. Madame Chiang's presence in Washington gave her access to the President and to see firsthand the impact of public opinion on his decision-making. This allowed her to find ways to secure promises from him [19]. These promises were often broken later but at significant points they convinced the Chinese that they had American favor. Her presence also added weight to the President's statements about China made during her time in the US, particularly when those comments were made at a joint press conference [20].

Madame Chiang was the first woman and first Chinese national to address the Joint Houses of Congress, which she did on 18 February, 1943. She opened her speech by saying that "[i]n speaking to Congress I am literally speaking to the American people" [21]. Madame Chiang focused on the discussion of the plight of the Chinese people in fighting the Japanese. American public opinion, government policy and military staff had all begun to adhere to the "Hitler First" policy that put the war in the Pacific in second place to the defeat of the Germans in Europe. Madame's aim was to shift Congress's thinking towards giving greater and more urgent support to the Chinese. She espoused the shared values of the people of China and the United States and through retelling stories of her own connections to the US was able to demonstrate the bond between the two countries. Beyond persuading Congress about the need to give greater assistance to China, she also built greater cultural understanding and warm feeling towards the Chinese people.

By addressing Congress directly, she was able to shame them into action on repealing the Chinese Exclusion Act. The exclusion laws had been passed in 1882 and they prevented Chinese immigration to the US for all but the most elite Chinese citizens. The laws had originally been a response to the fear of the Chinese "invasion" of California in the 1880s. Public opinion at that time had been very anti-Chinese. People saw workers from China as stealing their jobs, undermining their claims for work rights and lowering their wages. As the labor movement gained in sophistication they lobbied Congress to restrict the influx of cheap foreign labor [22]. Repeal had been discussed for years but there were always reasons to delay action. Madame Chiang's visit, however, made further delay impossible. Her performance while presenting her speech to Congress, which moved US representatives and drew long standing ovations and also received a great deal of positive press, was irresistible. She made it near impossible for Congress to deny the pleadings of a state that was an ally and shared so much in common with the US. These moves also led to more favorable public opinion towards supporting China with materiel and supplies as well as strategy. There was pressure on Congress from the American public to do more for China despite what the war strategists and military officials might have thought was in the best interests of the United States and the Allied cause more generally.

Madame's visit was not welcomed by all. Her level of access and influence (or interference) troubled some in Roosevelt's administration, and very likely the President himself was annoyed with her insistence, at a time when the conduct of the war was more and more in the hands of the bureaucracy and shaped by international factors. Chinese public diplomacy during the war was not necessarily resulting in policy outcomes that were in the US's interest. The level of influence that the Chinese were able to gain from interacting and speaking to the American public directly was very effective in many ways. Madame Chiang was a particularly effective public diplomat. She was charming, graceful and elegant. She was also clever and cunning and knew how to manipulate her audience.

There was also evidence that Madame Chiang tried to interfere with the 1944 US presidential election. Republican Wendell Willkie had run against Franklin Roosevelt in the 1940 presidential election and lost. In late 1942, he embarked on a world tour that included a trip to China. During his time in China, Willkie came

to know and love the Chinese people through Chiang and his government officials. Chiang Kai-shek and Madame Chiang were taken with Willkie and believed he was sympathetic to China's plight. Willkie was full of promises of support for Chiang and his regime, particularly in their demand for more munitions and troops [11]. Chiang's eagerness to befriend Willkie was a result of the fact that he believed Willkie would run for president again in 1944 and win. When it became obvious that the Chiang's charms had worked on him and the extent of his willingness to promote China's cause in the United States became apparent, more active steps were taken to assist Willkie's cause.

According to one newspaper and magazine publisher and media owner, Madame Chiang had made it clear to him that she wanted to support Wendell Willkie to win the 1944 election and that she would spend whatever it took to make that happen. Gardner Cowles reported in his memoirs that he had had a private dinner with Madame Chiang where the conversation had taken place [23]. The US Ambassador to China, Clarence Gauss, reported that the Chiang's were confident it would be Willkie sitting at the post-war peace table and that this would very much serve China's interests [11]. At official functions in China, Chinese delegates referred to Mr. Willkie as the next President of the United States and even introduced him as such [24]. It was clear there was deep support for Wendell Willkie and his election campaign and beyond what would be expected in the established norms of diplomatic practice.

Madame Chiang was not the only representative Chiang sent to the US. Chiang had appointed her brother, T.V. Soong, as a special representative to Washington in mid-1940. After Pearl Harbor, he was appointed Chinese Foreign Minister. Chiang had earlier appointed the respected liberal scholar Hu Shi as Ambassador to Washington but his role was to conduct official government to government relations. Madame Chiang and T.V. Soong were clearly sent with a different role in mind. They were to speak to the American people and to engage them in the story and plight of China. Winning the sympathy of the public through a concerted public diplomacy campaign was seen as the most effective way to serve China's interests.

T.V. remained in Washington to manage this public diplomacy campaign. He soon became friendly with FDR's closest advisors and Washington insiders, including prominent Americans who formed what later became known as the China Lobby. Being in the US also gave Soong direct access to the American public and he made speeches drawing attention to China's plight. On October 10, 1942, the anniversary of Sun Yat-sen's Republican Revolution, Soong told an audience at Carnegie Hall in New York City that China was fighting the way George Washington fought during the American revolution, that China was struggling for its democratic freedom and that it was determined to contribute to the post-war world order as a champion of justice and freedom. He argued that China should, therefore, sit on an executive council of the United Nations Organization as an equal with the US and other Allies [25]. He also wrote articles for various newspapers and journals with similar themes and advocating policies that were sympathetic to China (see, for example, [26]). As with Madame Chiang's visit, the level of access Soong had to public audiences and to key government officials, and the President himself was only possible because of his presence in the United States and this was clearly the aim of his being there.

Public opinion polls showed dedicated support for the Chinese (or at least the Chinese in China, not for Chinese-Americans or for Chinese immigration). In June 1942 only 9% of respondents to a poll conducted by the Bureau of Intelligence believed that China was doing the least of the Allies to win the war, while 11% believed that the US was doing the least. The same poll found that Americans believed that China was the least likely of the Allies to make a separate peace, even less likely than Britain [27]. The Chinese representatives in the US

presented the core message that China had been valiantly struggling in a horrific war against the Japanese and had done so single-handedly for many years before the Allies had entered the conflict. Another key message was that the Chinese were like Americans and they could work together. Evidence of the success of this message can be found in responses to the question “will our Allies cooperate with us after the war?” asked in May 1942. Eighty-three percent of respondents believed that China was the most likely to cooperate [28]. In September 1943 the US Ambassador to China, Clarence Gauss, who was himself skeptical of the Nationalist government, recognized that Chinese “propaganda” in the United States had influenced many Americans to see nothing wrong with China or the Chinese war effort. The public held the US government and misguided policy responsible for anything that went wrong with the war in Asia [29].

By late 1944 there was less optimism about China’s future and its relationship with the US in the post-war world. Officials, the press and the military concluded that political problems in China would complicate the post-war relationship. Japan’s massive Ichigo offensive in Eastern China combined with the resignation of the US Ambassador in China and the recall, at Chiang Kai-shek’s insistence, of the US General commanding Chinese forces, exposed China’s weaknesses. Those shortcomings had been hidden by the propaganda and concerted lobbying of Chinese officials that portrayed China as a strong nation of democratic, hardworking and peace-loving people.

Between 1941 and 1944 Chiang Kai-shek’s personal and official representatives in the United States influenced policy-makers and the American public and used public diplomacy (without it being named as such) to shift US foreign policy towards the assistance of China’s interests. The political pressure generated by the lobbying of US officials and the American public by Chinese representatives in the US influenced policy-makers and the public. Their physical presence in the United States gave these Chinese officials frequent and wide-spread access to both of these key groups. Chiang’s tactic of sending both his wife and brother-in-law to the US did influence some US policy in the short-term. Chiang’s personal position and that of his regime was reinforced for the duration of the war. Although longer term these outcomes may have not lasted, China’s use of public diplomacy during World War II was very effective.

## 5. What is different about modern public diplomacy?

In modern times public diplomacy can be conducted in a much more discreet and far less transparent way. Using the internet to shape public opinion and even influence elections allows foreign powers to engage in diplomacy directly with the people of another country without the knowledge of or by making the government aware of their efforts. The question, though, should be does this make it any more effective? Transparency would create reassurance, but it would not necessarily prevent the efforts of foreign powers to influence the citizens of another country. Surely it is the intent of the behavior that is of greater concern than the means used to influence others.

Jan Melissen in the *Oxford Handbook of Modern Diplomacy* argues that engaging with foreign publics has become a more necessary condition to conducting successful diplomacy. Public diplomacy is merging with traditional diplomacy to create a “new public diplomacy” [30]. This thinking may be driven more of a transformation of forms of public diplomacy and the new appearance of it than the reality of any seismic shift in diplomatic practice. Madame Chiang in the 1940s was very much aware of the need to address the American people directly and use them as



a channel to shift their government's thinking. Even before the internet and mass cross border communications, the need to gain public favor was recognized and important resources allocated to achieving that end. The Chinese sent several key representatives to the United States for visits and to reside for the duration of the war. They found ways to interact with the American public directly and to use US public opinion to sway Congress and the administration into supporting policies that aided China's cause.

China's more recent efforts at public diplomacy have been less effective than these earlier activities. There is merit, then, in exploring what it is that makes China's public diplomacy less effective. The study conducted by Cao Wei, then, is worthy of investigation. In a study exploring Chinese public diplomacy in six countries, including Russia, Japan, France, Germany, the UK and US, Wei found that very little positive impact on favorable public sentiment toward China. In fact, the growth of Chinese military power caused concern in all of these societies, except Russia, that outweighed any efforts at public diplomacy in these states. Even friendly economic relations did little to assist foreign publics in their receptiveness to Chinese diplomatic charm. Wei found three possible reasons for this. Firstly, there is a bias against China that comes from the difference between the political system and culture of China and Western countries. Secondly, China's military power is a disadvantage. Few countries are happy about increasing military power of another, apart from very close allies. Third, China's proficiency at conducting public diplomacy is inadequate [9]. Wei is not alone in this conclusion (though perhaps in the specificity of the reasons why). Other scholars agree with the conclusion that China's public diplomacy is largely ineffective and that much work needs to be done in terms of both the messaging of that diplomacy and the activities used to spread that message for it to sway Western societies in favor of China's policies (see, for example, [5, 8]).

If China is using modern methods of public diplomacy and yet being no more effective in their influence, then it is not these modern methods that should be a major focus of concern. The intent, effectiveness and receptibility of the message should be a greater concern. China's public diplomacy during World War II was very effective in achieving the aims of Chiang Kai-shek's regime. Admittedly, China was operating under an ostensibly democratic regime. The extent to which China under Chiang was more democratic than the current regime is the subject of a long-standing academic debate that cannot be espoused in detail here. Certainly, though, Chiang and his officials were skilled at presenting the message that his government and the Chinese people were totally committed to democracy, freedom and equality and so shared those values with the people of the United States. Ultimately it was this message, and not so much the methods used to convey them, that allowed Chinese public diplomacy in the 1940s more effective.

Moving beyond influencing public opinion, and even governments, to direct interference in an election can be seen as a breach of diplomatic good faith. Defining the boundaries of legitimate public diplomacy that involves trying to influence policies and people and interference in the outcome of an election poses a challenge to the development of international norms for diplomacy. It is related to the advancement in technology and the rise in new areas of diplomacy, such as cyber diplomacy. As the internet becomes the newest realm of global commons, the international community needs to think more deeply about how to establish norms and regulate behavior to match the capabilities that cyber technologies allow.

Public diplomacy and the norms of international relations suggest that it is improper for one state to sow discord and disharmony in another. The internet and the ability to easily "break into" public discourse in another country have led to increasing concerns in recent times about the ability for a foreign power to do just that. Not only are the methods available to do this seen as making it easier, but it



is also possible to do it without detection. The anonymity the internet has allowed for the source of news stories and communication with a foreign public means that there is a lack of accountability for the messages within that communication. Russia's interference in the 2016 US presidential election has sparked a debate about what should be tolerated as rights to privacy and free speech on the internet and the need to intervene to secure the rights of the state. While most media have rules and restrictions on its ownership, use, and funding, the internet has so far escaped thorough regulation. This is now being reviewed.

There is evidence that the Russians used paid advertisements, clearly targeting specific groups and electorates using metadata gathered from Facebook and other internet social media. Russian sources also created "fake news" and planted stories on the internet that were not true in order to sway voters against voting for Hillary Clinton. The Democratic National Campaign was also hacked into and sensitive information about their campaign strategy and the candidate was accessed. As Baines and Jones point out in their article about the subject, influencing foreign elections is not a new phenomenon, but this was an extraordinary level of interference. The methods used to influence the election also constituted an attempt to undermine democracy altogether rather than just trying to sway the outcome [31]. This intent does pose a threat to society and could qualify as an act of espionage or worse.

It is not just the interference in elections that poses a threat to modern democracies. The ability to sway the legislative branch can have a greater impact on the policies of a country. As laws are made by legislators that are influenced by a broad set of interests, if foreign states are able to add their interests into the mix then favorable policies will follow. There has long been a struggle between Congress and the presidency over who has control for foreign policy [32]. In order to offset some of the advantages that the presidency has with its use of the State Department, Congressmen often visit foreign states or make themselves available for foreign officials to gather information about foreign affairs. This method of gathering information, however, is problematic in that it opens the door for misinformation or propaganda that does not necessarily serve US interests [33]. This well describes the events detailed above in Sino-US relations during World War II, but it also continues to be a vulnerability of the US political system. It is not, however, a new problem arising from the newly formulated concept of public diplomacy or new public diplomacy. If anything, this is an issue that has existed since the founding fathers established the United States.

The use of the internet and digital means to reach a population has increased the potential "threat" of foreign interference but foreign interference of and in itself, like the term propaganda, is not a negative concept. It is the perspective taken about the intent of the interference and the objectives of foreign countries in using their influence that should be the focus of concern. The methods used to conduct public diplomacy have less impact on the effectiveness of influence over a foreign public than the message being sent. The best protection for a state against negative influences that can impinge on its interests is to ensure robust principles and systems exist within its society. An informed and questioning public, an open and transparent media and elected officials who measure the performance of their duties on how well they serve the public interest are all much more important than preventing foreign access to the internet and social media.

## **6. Conclusion**

This chapter has examined the use of public diplomacy by China across different time periods of history. This examination reveals that public diplomacy, despite

being the focus of recent study by a range of scholars, has been a long-practiced activity of states in order to influence other states towards policies and attitudes that are favorable to their interests and aims of foreign policy. In World War II, China very effectively used methods of engagement with the people of the United States, such as personal addresses to audiences, newspaper and magazine articles and public appearances. China was able to gain the sympathy of the American people for its war aims and convinced them of the need for greater support from the US government. Some Chinese officials were even involved in trying to influence the outcome of the 1944 US elections so that a president more sympathetic to China's plight would be sitting at the peace table at the end of the war. Exploring these events and the means the Chinese used to work towards their objectives sheds light on more recent studies of these topics.

The digital revolution has created an environment where political messages can more easily cross state boundaries and there is greater opportunity for government officials to interact with foreign publics directly. The cyber world, more importantly, provides anonymous access. There is a lack of transparency and accountability in the use of social media and internet news sites to connect with people in a different state. That lack of transparency is a cause for concern. It is the specter of a foreign authoritarian regime being able to undermine the legitimate government in democratic states that keeps government officials awake at night. There is a clear need to work towards greater accountability in the cyber world and to develop regulation and norms around cyber diplomacy. This is a task that is urgent and necessary. Creating a strong and robust regime for the digital world and cyber diplomacy will not, however, create a "safe" political environment free of foreign interference. Not that all foreign interference is inherently negative. The motives and intent behind the interference is the key to its virtue. The best defense against dangerous foreign interference that is targeted to break down democratic principles is to strengthen the democratic model that is in place.

A well informed, educated public that has access to good information, questions what they read and are told, scrutinizes decisions and arguments and has access to a free and open media is a good start towards protecting democratic values and regimes. China's more recent public diplomacy lacks the effectiveness of its earlier efforts. In World War II, China could claim its support and championing of American values of freedom, equality and democracy. That is no longer true and the American public can determine for itself the values of the Chinese government. The fear brought about by the rise of China's military power outweighs the messages being sent by Chinese government officials to foreign publics through its diplomacy. There are many other factors at play that determine the effectiveness of China's influence over the American people and those in the West more generally. The means and methods of the conduct of public diplomacy, then, is not the area for greatest concern. Rather any studies of modern public diplomacy should focus on the intent and objectives of a state's public diplomacy and how effective the diplomacy is in achieving those aims. There will always be a line to cross from public diplomacy into espionage and damaging another society with diplomacy that should always be the subject of regulation and frameworks to ensure that line is not crossed. In itself, however, gaining access to the public of a different state and trying to influence it towards supporting one's interests and foreign policy is not something we should work to avoid. We should be careful that the debate about public diplomacy and its utility stays on course for delivering good outcomes for the international community and is not distracted down byways of fear.

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### **Author details**

Sally Burt  
University of New South Wales, Canberra, Australia

\*Address all correspondence to: [skburt@outlook.com](mailto:skburt@outlook.com)

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